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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the survey was to collect and analyze data derived from a pre-selected list of questions pertaining to library user education services/programs, and to ascertain how librarians rate various instructional components. Specifically, the survey questionnarie attempted to identify and to compare current user education activities from their institutional categories -junior colleges, undergraduate schools, and universities. Questionnaire items covered four broad areas of interest: (1) What general instructional services are offered by libraries? (2) What is the extent and arrangement of formal basic and advanced bibliographic instruction? (3) What major difficulties do librarians encounter in planning and implementing their programs? (4) How do librarians rate various instructional components? Eighty-nine percent of the responding librarians concluded that user education is relevant to libraries. A limited profile of instructional services and librarian attitudes toward user education in New York State academic libraries has been produced by this survey investigation. (Author/NH)

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SURVEY OF USER EDUCATION IN NEW YORK STATE ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

by

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Paper presented at the New York Library Association annual conference in New York City, October 6, 1971 (College and University Libraries Section session on "User Education in Academic Libraries")

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PREFACE

This report of a survey of academic library user education in New York State was sponsored and funded by the College and University Libraries Section of the New York Library Association. The survey was planned and executed by the Committee on the Requirements of the Academic Library User. Minor revisions have been made to the paper since presentation before the New York Library Association annual conference. Committee members who assisted in the preparation of the study were:

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Carol Salverson, Survey Chairman
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Descriptive Section

Educating academic library users is one of our profession's greatest challenges and, at the same time, one of its unceasing frustrations. Rapid enrollment increases, faculty apathy toward libraries, staffing shortages, the proliferation of information resources, and the very few evaluative studies available that examine the effectiveness of various approaches to library instruction all contribute to this challenge and frustration.

The following report on a survey of academic library user education in New York State represents the collective effort of the Committee on the Requirements of the Academic Library User, a subcommittee of the College and University Libraries Section. You may recall that our committee sponsored a wide-ranging symposium on the academic library user under the theme, "Use, Mis-Use, and Non-Use of Academic Libraries" at Watertown in the Spring of 1970. One overriding Committee concern emerged from that session: the significant lack of information apparently available on the amount, variety, and value of library instruction in New York State, and in the nation as well.

A search of library literature during the past five years reveals approximately 150 entries in the entire area of academic library user education, but when the search is narrowed to academic library user education programs, the list dwindles to under 50 entries.

Two recent studies deserve separate mention. Barbara Phipps, in an article entitled "Library Instruction for the

Undergraduate," which appeared in September 1968 issue of College and Research Libraries, reports on a 1965 survey "to determine the current extent and effectiveness of methods of library instruction." Her examination of 200 undergraduate colleges is largely descriptive, contains some interpretive comments from respondents, and concludes that dissatisfaction with the status quo is almost universal and that the future lies in more application of programmed learning and audio-visual technology.

Verna Melum, in a valuable contribution, summarizes an ambitious personal survey of over fifty college and university campuses during 1969 in the September 1971 installment of Wilson Library Bulletin. A sampling of her many salient observations on library instruction: re-evaluation is taking place everywhere, faculty generally react positively when instructional services are offered, the number of programs for upper-level and graduate students are increasing, library instruction is meaningful only when motivated by need, and new approaches such as self-guided tours and programmed learning are beginning to achieve acceptance.

The survey report to be presented today will add several dimensions to most of the user education literature published to date. It covers an entire state, three types of higher education institutions, and provides a systematic tabulation of responses for each library instruction program and service investigated. This last point is important because far too many studies have appeared without the accompanying data upon which judgments are derived.

The survey's main objective was to collect and analyze data derived from a pre-selected list of questions pertaining to library user education services/programs, and to ascertain how librarians rate various instructional components. More specifically, the survey questionnaire attempted to identify and to compare current user education activities from three institutional categories - junior colleges, undergraduate schools, and universities. Questionnaire items covered these four broad areas of interest:

1) What general instructional services are offered by libraries?

2) What is the extent and arrangement of formal basic and advanced bibliographic instruction?

3) What major difficulties do librarians encounter in planning and implementing their programs?

4) How do librarians rate various instructional components?

The seventeen item questionnaire was sent to reader service librarians in all 229 academic libraries in New York State during May 1971. 125 or 55% responded. The response rate was similar for the three educational categories. An overall response rate of this magnitude allows us to convey the practices and opinions of a substantial segment of the academic library community. Data was also solicited from public libraries, but not analyzed for this report due to the general irrelevancy of the questionnaire to their programs.

It is appropriate to define user education as employed in this study. For our purposes, user education encompasses all planned methods, materials, and services which provide

the library user with an awareness of and ability to use the library with some degree of competence.

Now for the report.

Under the category of general library instructional services, the three institutional types indicate their aggregate use of various programs in the following descending order. 80% provide orientation tours. Next comes formal instruction, a preplanned session or program, with 77%. Bibliographic aids and handbooks are indicated by 71% and 69%, respectively. As for audiovisual presentations, displays, and self-instruction, each institutional group had 55% or less answering yes. Self-instruction brings up the rear with 17% use overall. The undergraduate schools are the only category with the same rank order alignment as the composite picture. Two-year colleges offered more formal instruction than any other service. The universities indicate that formal instruction is in front with 95% use, and handbooks a close second with 89%.

Next, we shall look at the availability of non-credit basic and specialized instruction by institutional type. Two-year colleges report that 86% have some form of non-credit basic instruction. 57% of the junior colleges report that basic instruction is requested of them, 66% require attendance by students, and only 17% indicate attendance is voluntary. 29% of these libraries initiate or offer basic instruction without faculty request and 51% offer it to all freshmen. 77% report that their basic instructional programs are two hours or less. In regard to specialized or advanced bibliographic instruction, 46% of the two-year libraries respond

that they offer such a service and that it is taught by librarians in 40% of the libraries. Junior colleges utilize the lecture method (69%) and assignments (46%) in basic instruction frequently, and surpass all institutional categories in the amount of A-V with 40%.

Turning to undergraduate schools, we find that a much smaller percentage, 53%, report the use of non-credit basic instruction. More libraries specify that attendance for basic instruction is required (36%) than voluntary (21%). The percentage of libraries that provide instruction to all freshmen (21%) is significantly lower than that for junior colleges (51%). Mediated programs are represented by only 19%, the lowest percentage of the three institutional groups. The quantity of specialized instruction at 43% approximates that of the two-year schools (46%).

Universities report a much higher percentage of non-credit basic instruction, 83%, than the undergraduate libraries. The vast majority (83%) of basic instruction is requested by faculty. Response to the question on whether instruction is given to all freshmen plummets to 6%, lowest of the academic categories. In specialized instruction, however, universities outrank all others with a 72% incidence.

Several additional cross-institutional comparisons are informative. Approximately one-third more two-year and university libraries engage in basic instruction than undergraduate college libraries. As one progresses up the institutional ladder, the provision of instruction to all freshmen decreases markedly. But as the size of the student population increases, more

libraries provide basic and specialized instructional programs. Credit courses are rare, with an aggregate average of 9%.

The number of libraries supporting a full-time library instruction librarian is minimal - seven in junior colleges, five in undergraduate institutions, and two in universities.

When asked about instructional methods, the total percentages show a preponderance of lectures (59%), followed by assignments (29%) and A-V (27%). Programmed instruction has found little application, with a meager 2% reported.

Evaluative Section

Two percent of the librarians answering the questionnaire concluded that user education is irrelevant to libraries. One librarian remarked that "The best (perhaps the only) time to teach the use of the library is when the student needs to know... when the student asks...a question." A large majority of librarians consider library user education relevant - 89%. A few commented that an organized program accomplishes more in a given time, and reaches more students, than providing assistance only to those who actively seek help.

The questionnaire asked each librarian to evaluate various instructional components for his type of library on a three point scale of important, useful, and unimportant. Formal library instruction was rated highest for all three types of institutions. An aggregate 68% believe that basic library instruction is important, and 57% indicated that specialized/advanced instruction is important. The value attached to advanced instruction increases from 2-year schools

through univerisites. Overall, handbooks, bibliographic aids, and tours were most often considered as useful on the scale. A full-time library instruction librarian was ranked lowest by the respondents, with percentages evenly divided between important, useful, and unimportant.

Most librarians encountered institutional difficulties in the development and implementation of user education programs. Nearly half emphasized lack of staff and faculty apathy toward the library as major problems. One third cited student indifference, a quarter specified inadequate facilities, and 13% reported insufficient funds. A selection of direct quotations highlight some of the difficulties:

> "The staff feels (a) great need for more active work in this area, but we are too understaffed..."
>
> "The main obstacle is lack of faculty cooperation."
>
> "I have a very effective lecture that pleases students... unfortunately they <u>think</u> it's going to be dull and arrive grudgingly."
>
> "Many elements of (the) university administration regard the library as a 'frill'."
>
> "There is insufficient time in all curriculums..."
>
> "Occasional lack of commitment by library staff to (the) value of instruction."

In spite of obstacles encountered and improvements desired, 14% of the librarians said they were satisfied. They reported that their programs had made an impact on the degree and quality of library use by students. One librarian attributed satisfaction to that college's small student body, and a few others traced their success to the fact that credit instruction is offered or that library instruction occurs in conjunction with a research assignment in a particular course.

On the other side, a large proportion, 78%, indicated dissatisfaction with their efforts. A librarian with no formal instruction program noted that "too much time is spent in individual instruction which should be given to groups." The most frequent reason cited for dissatisfaction was that not enough students receive instruction. As one librarian remarked, "We have never been able to reach the entire Freshman class." Another said, "We do not offer enough instruction at any academic level, graduate or undergraduate." Others concurred that their program was "not comprehensive enough." One librarian added, "the emphasis needs to be shifted from reliance on Freshman orientation tours with their limited objectives, to a greatly expanded program of formal instruction..." Various librarians criticized the effect of their teaching programs on students: "We do not reach enough students when they are ripest for instruction..." "The course is not given for credit, therefore the motivation is slight." It has "no lasting effect." There is "not quite enough follow-up." One librarian summed up the deficiencies of his program by noting that it is "not yet organized to reach all students in a logical way when most appropriate."

There was little appreciable difference in the level of satisfaction noted between the three types of institutions, but the rate of dissatisfaction increases with the size of the student body. In comparison with the dissatisfied respondents, those who are satisfied offer fewer orientation tours and more basic instruction which is required of all freshmen students.

What general patterns and future research needs are suggested by this study? First, although the vast majority of the state's academic libraries provide general user education services and formal instruction, there is widespread dissatisfaction. Formal instructional programs are criticized for failing to reach enough students and lacking depth and teaching effectiveness. Handbooks, bibliographies and orientation tours are not considered self-sufficient means for teaching library use. Despite the advantages of media to reach large numbers of students and facilitate learning, the use of audio-visual materials is low, and the lecture method still predominates. Self-instructional modules and programmed learning units are infrequently employed. Instructional strategies such as library use assignments, which require student participation, are uncommon. Junior colleges appear to exhibit more involvement in user education than the other two institutional categories. They report greater percentage utilization in the areas of audiovisual presentations, self-instruction, library use assignments, the full-time instructional librarian, and required basic instruction for all freshmen.

It would be merely speculative to comment on why the state of pervasive dissatisfaction with present programs exists side by side with an overriding commitment to the value and relevance of user education. But this untenable condition cannot and should not remain indefinitely if academic librarianship continues to attach major significance to an instructional mission. Either effective performance of present objectives must be achieved or the instructional role reconceptualized and new approaches explored.

This survey investigation has produced a limited profile of instructional services and librarian attitudes toward user education in New York State academic libraries. Further work is urgently needed to probe more deeply into the problem areas and rationale of library user education. Fresh insights and new directions will arrive only when intensive, controlled experimentation of various instructional alernatives is undertaken and reported to the profession.

APPENDICES

I. Library User Education Survey Questionnaire

II. Data Tabulations

A. Number of Responses by Institutional Category

B. Responses Converted to Percentages

NEW YORK LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES SECTION
COMMITTEE ON THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY USER

SURVEY OF LIBRARY USER EDUCATION

1. Name of library:_____

2. Your name and title:_____

3. Type of library (check one):
   ☐ 2 yr. college
   ☐ 4 yr. college
   ☐ University
   ☐ Other (Specify)_____

4. Number of volumes:_____

5. Main collection stacks: ☐ open ☐ closed

6. Number of full-time students:_____

7. Percentage of students who commute:
   ☐ 0-25% ☐ 26-50% ☐ 51-75% ☐ 76-100%

8. Please check the instructional services which your library currently offers:

   ___a. Audio-visual presentations
   ___b. Library handbook
   ___c. Instructional displays
   ___d. Orientation tours
   ___e. Self-instructional devices/materials
   ___f. Bibliographic aids prepared by the library (general guides, bibliographies, newsletters, etc.)
   ___g. Formal library instruction (basic and/or specialized)

9. Do you offer non-credit formal instruction (other than orientation tours) in basic library skills? ☐ yes ☐ no

   If yes, check each category which applies.

   Instruction scheduled:
   ☐ By library on a regular basis

   ☐ Upon instructor request

   ☐ In conjunction with a course (Specify)_____

   Instruction received by: ☐ All freshmen ☐ Other (Specify)_____

   Attendance: ☐ Required ☐ Voluntary

   Duration: ☐ Two hours or less ☐ More than two hours (Specify)_____

   Method(s) of Instruction:
   ☐ Lecture ☐ A-V aids ☐ Programmed instruction
   ☐ Library use assignment ☐ Other (Specify)_____

10. Do you offer non-credit specialized bibliographic instruction in particular subjects? ☐ yes ☐ no

Subject(s):_____

Instruction given by: ☐ Librarian ☐ Teaching Faculty

☐ Both

Duration (average):_____

11. Do you offer a credit course in basic and/or specialized library instruction? ☐ yes ☐ no

If yes, please describe your program (e.g. number of credits, duration)._____

_____

_____

12. Do you have a librarian who has full-time responsibility for library instruction?

☐ yes ☐ no

Please attach additional comments about any aspect of the preceding questions. Also, please describe any innovative program/service not covered.

13. If your library has a written and/or audiovisual program of library instruction, would you be willing to exhibit these materials and discuss them informally at the NYLA conference in October, 1971?

☐ yes ☐ no

14. What are the major difficulties which you encounter in developing and implementing a program of user education?

☐ Insufficient funds ☐ Inadequate facilities

☐ Lack of Staff ☐ Faculty apathy

☐ Student indifference ☐ Other (Specify)_____

_____

15. Are you satisfied with your user education program? (Please indicate brief reason for your answer)

☐ yes ☐ no _____

_____

16. How do you evaluate the following components of library user education for your <u>type</u> of library? (Check one column for each component)

		IMPORTANT	USEFUL	UNIMPORTANT
a.	Formal instruction in basic library skills			
b.	Orientation tours			
c.	Formal, specialized bibliographic instruction			
d.	Library handbook			
e.	Production and distribution of bibliographic aids			
f.	Full-time orientation/ instruction librarian			

17. <u>In your opinion</u>, is user education inappropriate/irrelevant to libraries?

☐ yes ☐ no

- -

We would appreciate receiving any materials relating to user education (including instructional handbooks). They will contribute to our state-of-the art report and perhaps form the nucleus of a loan collection of library instructional materials.

Please send completed survey and all instructional materials to:

(Miss) Carol Salverson
Survey Chairman
Readers' Services Librarian
Jefferson Community College
P. O. Box 255
Watertown, New York 13601

SURVEY OF LIBRARY USER EDUCATION IN NEW YORK STATE
Conducted by
New York Library Association
College and University Libraries Section
(May, 1971)

Number of Responses and Return Rate from Each Type of Institution

Institutions	Responses	Return Rate
2 Year Colleges	35 of 70	50%
Undergraduate*	72 of 129	56%
Universities	18 of 30	60%

*This category is composed of 94% undergraduate schools and 6% professional schools in law, medicine, and education.

Number of Responses by Institutional Category

	2 Year Colleges	Undergraduate	Universities	Total
5. Main Collection Stacks:				
Open	34	67	15	116
Closed	-	4	1	5
Partial Access	-	1	2	3
7. Commuting Students:				
0 - 25%	6	35	5	46
26 - 50%	4	8	2	14
51 - 75%	3	7	4	14
76 - 100%	20	17	6	43
8. Instructional Services Offered by Library:				
a. A-V presentations	19	14	5	38
b. Handbook	24	46	16	86
c. Displays	16	23	6	45
d. Tours	27	59	14	100
e. Self-instruction	11	7	3	21
f. Bibliographic aids	26	49	14	89
g. Formal library instruction	30	49	17	96
9. Non-credit Basic Instruction:				
Offered (yes)	30	38	15	83

	2 Yr.	Undgr.	Univ.	Total
Instruction scheduled:				
Regularly by library	10	9	3	22
Upon instructor's request	20	33	15	68
Instruction received by all Freshmen	18	15	1	34
Attendance required	23	26	8	57
Attendance voluntary	6	15	5	26
Duration:				
Two hours or less	27	32	12	71
More than two hours	2	5	2	9
Methods of instruction:				
Lecture	24	36	14	74
A-V aids	14	14	6	34
Programmed instruction	2	-	1	3
Library use assignment	16	14	6	36
10. Non-credit Specialized Instruction:				
Offered (yes)	16	31	13	60
Instruction given by:				
Librarian	14	27	11	52
Teaching faculty	-	2	-	2
Both	3	4	4	11
11. Credit Course in Library Instruction:	2	7	2	11
12. Librarian with Full-time Responsibility for Library Instruction:	7	5	2	14
14. Difficulties Encountered in Developing and Implementing Programs of User Education:				
Funds	3	9	4	16
Staff	17	33	11	61
Student Indifference	11	26	2	39
Facilities	9	13	7	29
Faculty apathy	16	35	5	56
15. Satisfaction with Present Program:				
Yes	6	10	2	18
No	25	57	15	97
16. Librarians' Ratings of Services for Their Type of Library:				
Formal basic instruction:				
Important	22	50	13	85

	2 Yr.	Undgr.	Univ.	Total
Useful	7	14	4	25
Unimportant	-	3	-	3
Orientation tours:				
Important	10	19	3	32
Useful	15	37	9	61
Unimportant	6	12	5	23
Formal specialized instruction:				
Important	12	44	15	71
Useful	13	16	2	31
Unimportant	2	5	-	7
Library handbook:				
Important	10	27	9	46
Useful	20	34	8	62
Unimportant	1	7	-	8
Bibliographic aids:				
Important	10	24	8	42
Useful	17	32	9	58
Unimportant	3	6	-	9
Full-time instructional librarian:				
Important	14	16	6	36
Useful	8	18	7	33
Unimportant	8	21	-	29
17. Inappropriateness of User Education:				
Yes	2	1	-	3
No	30	64	17	111

Responses Converted to Percentages

	2 Year Colleges	Undergraduate	Universities	Total
5. Stacks:				
Open	97	93	83	93
Closed	-	6	6	4
Partial Access	-	1	11	2
7. Commuting Students:				
0 - 25%	17	49	28	37
26 - 50%	11	11	11	11
51 - 75%	9	10	22	11
76 - 100%	57	24	33	34
8. Instructional Services:				
a. A-V presentations	54	19	28	30
b. Handbook	69	64	89	69
c. Displays	46	32	33	36
d. Tours	77	82	78	80
e. Self-instruction	31	10	17	17
f. Bibliographic aids	74	68	78	71
g. Formal instruction	86	68	95	77
9. Non-Credit Basic Instruction:				
Offered (yes)	86	53	83	66
Instruction scheduled:				
Regularly by library	29	13	17	18
Upon instructor's request	57	46	83	54
Instruction received by all Freshmen	51	21	6	27
Attendance required	66	36	44	46
Attendance voluntary	17	21	28	21
Duration:				
Two hours or less	77	44	67	57
More than two hours	6	7	11	7
Methods of instruction:				
Lecture	69	50	78	59
A-V aids	40	19	33	27
Programmed instruction	6	-	6	2
Library use assignment	46	19	33	29

	2 Yr.	Undgr.	Univ.	Total
10. Non-credit Specialized Instruction:				
Offered (yes)	46	43	72	48
Instruction given by:				
Librarian	40	38	61	42
Teaching faculty	-	3	-	2
Both	9	6	22	9
11. Credit Course in Library Instruction:	6	10	11	9
12. Librarian with Full-time Responsibility for Library Instruction:	20	7	11	11
14. Difficulties Encountered in Developing and Implementing Programs of User Education:				
Funds	9	13	22	13
Staff	49	46	61	49
Student Indifference	31	36	11	31
Facilities	26	18	39	23
Faculty apathy	46	49	28	45
15. Satisfaction with Present Program:				
Yes	17	14	11	14
No	71	79	83	78
16. Librarians' Ratings of Services for Their Type of Library				
a. Formal basic instruction:				
Important	63	69	72	68
Useful	20	19	22	20
Unimportant	-	4	-	2
b. Orientation tours:				
Important	29	26	17	26
Useful	43	51	50	49
Unimportant	17	17	28	18
c. Formal specialized instruction:				
Important	34	61	83	57
Useful	37	22	11	25
Unimportant	6	7	-	6
d. Library handbook:				
Important	29	38	50	37
Useful	57	47	44	50
Unimportant	3	10	-	6

	2 Yr.	Undgr.	Univ.	Total
e. Bibliographic aids:				
Important	29	33	44	34
Useful	49	44	50	46
Unimportant	9	8	-	7
f. Full-time instructional librarian:				
Important	40	22	33	29
Useful	23	25	39	26
Unimportant	23	29	-	22
17. Inappropriateness of User Education				
Yes	6	1	-	2
No	86	89	95	89